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ABSTRACT

In this Inquiry Study, participants will explore the process of reading expository texts--the strategies participant/teachers use to make sense of them, and how expository texts are similar to and different from narrative and other types of texts. Participants will then examine aspects of expository texts, such as text structures, vocabulary, and building background knowledge, and discuss how these influence readers. To support the inquiry, numerous strategies and opportunities to "live through" a content study are provided. Lists 14 professional reading selections. Also lists suggested books, suggested articles/chapters, and suggested resource titles. (NKA)

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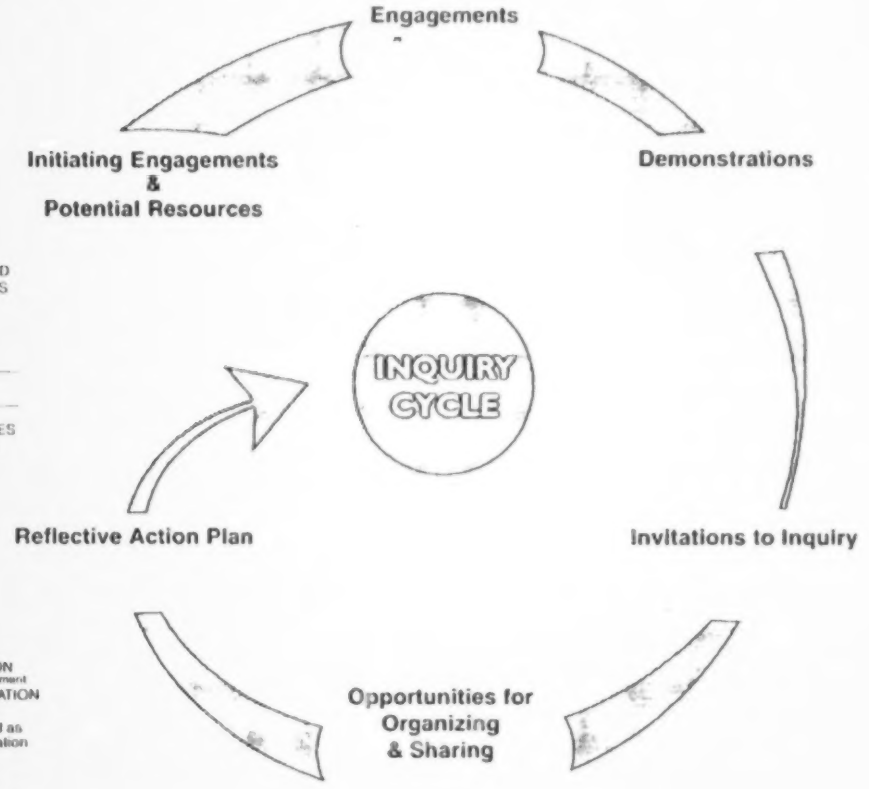
An Inquiry into Reading Content: Making Sense with Expository Texts

In this Inquiry Study, you will explore the *process* of reading expository texts and how to support readers as they construct meaning from these texts. You will begin by considering your own reading of expository texts—the strategies you use to make sense of them, and how expository texts are similar to and different from narrative and other types of texts. You will then examine aspects of expository texts, such as text structures, vocabulary, and building background knowledge, and discuss how these influence readers. To support your inquiry, numerous strategies and opportunities to "live through" a content study are provided.



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December 2000

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CS 512 296

LEARNING & LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

The following is a list of learning concepts that will be explored in the study. You are encouraged to add additional concepts, as it is not meant to represent an exhaustive list.

NOTE: Learning to read is a process that holds consistent across purposes for reading. A fuller set of concepts about learning to read and qualities of supportive contexts for literacy learning is available in earlier Reading Initiative curriculum. Most concepts hold true across the studies. Those included here are particular to this study. The way in which learners use language and learn language stays consistent; learners' ability to use what they know *is* impacted by various curriculum requirements and structures.

- Each knowledge domain or "content area" has its own ways of knowing; these ways of knowing are linked to particular linguistic structures used to make, share and preserve meaning.
- Disciplines are best thought of as thought-collectives, each with its own concepts and ways of thinking about problems. These unique characteristics generate predictable patterns of talking, writing, text structures and thought.
- Expository texts make use of alternate recording systems, such as maps, graphs, charts, etc., to redundantly convey significant information and relationships.
- Readers determine text structures and their useful features as they construct meaning.
- Readers learn content through cross-textual and interdisciplinary experiences using multiple sources of information.
- Productive reading experiences always involve working on the edge of what is known; a reader's interpretation of and focus within a text is dependent upon his/her current inquiry questions.
- Readers come to understand technical vocabulary and text structures through experience with oral and written discourse in a particular discipline.
- Both fiction and expository texts have equal responsibility to accurately convey "funded knowledge" (the knowledge generated by disciplines).
- Disciplines create and use specific sets of tools to generate and analyze knowledge; the use of tools such as interviews, surveys, experiments, often result in conceptual frameworks (Bloom's Taxonomy, Piaget's concepts of child development), which in part are predicated upon the way the knowledge was produced.
- The methods of data collection and analysis frame the results, and hence, what is treated as fact.
- Vocabulary is a product of engagement in a process, not a prerequisite to participation.
- Readers always have useful information to bring to any specific instance of reading.
- What readers already know about a topic influences what they will learn.
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FOCUSING QUESTIONS

These are questions that were generated to focus the experiences provided in this Inquiry Study. Everyone in your Reading Initiative group is invited to add questions throughout the study, and throughout the year.

- How can readers be encouraged to use personal knowledge and experiences as they read?
- How is strategic reading developed in particular disciplines?
- How can readers of varying flexibility be supported to make sense of expository texts?
- How can students who have difficulty reading be supported in reading expository texts?
- What is the development of vocabulary linked to readers' comprehension of content knowledge?
- How can we help readers connect with disciplines new to them and those that they want to know more about?
- What sign systems can readers utilize to support their acquisition of content knowledge?
- How do readers become problem posers as well as problem solvers?
- What are characteristics of a literate environment supportive of learning content?
- What kinds of writing engagements support readers' construction of content knowledge?
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TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH TOPIC

Vocabulary	Text patterns	Predicting	Graphic organizers	Narrative
Comprehension	Strategies	Schema	Prior knowledge	Expository
Scaffolding	Discussion	Inference	Content knowledge	Reflection
Questioning	Text sets	Facts	Content literacy	Metacognition
Knowledge Domains	Discipline	Text structure	Inquiry	Assessment
Content-area reading				

READING INITIATIVE LEARNING STRANDS

The Reading Initiative professional development experience could be envisioned as a complex tapestry of beliefs, engagements, readings, questions, and reflections. Each engagement is woven onto a foundation provided by the following strands.

Personal Literacy as Part of a Cultural Community	Knowledge Base	Close Observation	Supportive Literacy Contexts	Professional Culture
Focused observations and analysis by each participant of his/her own literacy processes and theories, including the forces that impact those theories	The concepts and experiences explored and supported by professional reading	Focused observations and analysis of students as literacy learners	Exploration and development of contexts that support and encourage readers and writers	Exploration and development of procedures and contexts that encourage collegiality

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An Inquiry into Reading Content

An Overview of the Study

Initiating Engagements

Shared experiences that help participants reflect on their personal experiences and knowledge—getting those out into the class conversation—as the group predicts the direction of the study.

Collecting what we know
As a group, participants contribute to four ongoing collections, 1) questions they have about the language study, 2) at least 5 resources for a group-created text set, including books, journals, articles in the popular press, reading/writing developmental continua, 3) a graffiti board collection of all related words and phrases, i.e. professional development, workshops, authentic learning, lifelong learning; 4) a list: what possible ways could we study how teachers learn?

I1
Reading Nightmares
Participants discuss their fears and concerns toward content area reading.

I2
Reading Content: Taking an Inquirer's Perspective
Participants discuss and list what questions they have about reading content material, what experiences they've had in the past, and what resources they predict will help them with their questions. These questions and experiences will help guide the inquiry.

I3
Downhole Heave Compensator
Read *Downhole Heave Compensator*, a magazine article, and answer questions; readers may not understand the text despite being capable of reading it.

I4
Cogent Thoughts
Participants reflect on and discuss quotes related to content reading.

I5
Personal History in Content Reading
Participants reflect on their own experiences with content reading in school.

Potential Resources

Multiple and varied sources of information that provide alternative perspectives and create opportunities for complex connections.

R1
Professional Reading
Optional: Schedule part of each meeting to read from the evolving text set, providing an opportunity to seek information to inform the group's questions.

R2
Creating a Text Set
Participants each contribute at least 5 resources for a group-created text set, including books, journals, articles in the popular press, pamphlets, etc.

Specific to this study:

- a set of recent literacy journals and texts;
- district and state curriculum documents

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Engagements

Opportunities to test out and explore multiple perspectives on the language process.

E1
How Do We Learn?
Participants think of something they have learned that they knew little about. What did they do? What was their process? What was easy/hard about it? Why? What influence did their choosing the topic have on the learning? This is related to content reading in the classroom.

E2
Narrative and Expository Texts
Participants read both a narrative and an expository text on the same topic and compare the two readings.

E3
Digging Into Expository Texts
Participants examine a text set of expository texts and consider the reading process and strategies used in reading them

E4
Expository Texts in Textbooks
Participants examine expository texts in textbooks and discuss the different features and ways of presenting information the texts use.

E5
Organizing and Presenting Information Graphically
Using a text set participants consider the different ways information is organized and presented and explore using some of these ways.

Demonstrations

Examination of language concepts and the learning process. Build from learners' questions and help to generate new insights.

D1
Influences on Reading for Understanding
Theoretical examination of the role of the reader, the text, and the context in a reading event.

D2
Text Structure and Expository Texts
Participants consider the different organizational structures used in expository texts and how understanding these support learning.

D3
Building Vocabulary, Concepts, and Background Knowledge
Strategies for vocabulary, building background knowledge, developing concepts, and solving problems when reading is challenging.

D4
Content Reading and the Inquiry Cycle
Participants reflect on an Inquiry Study they completed in the Reading Initiative and other inquiries in their lives. This model of learning is compared/contrasted with the model of learning from content textbooks.

D5
Putting It All Together: An Inquiry into Orphan Trains
Participants experience how a unit of study can begin when the information to be presented is unfamiliar to learners.

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Invitations to Inquiry

Experimenting by applying questions, tools, and methods of inquiry to a specific issue.

Q1
Organizing for Content Inquiry
Participants work with an upcoming unit of study and develop it so it will be more supportive of students and learning.

Q2
Exploring Content Area Reading Strategies
Decide on a strategy to use before the next meeting and report back.

Q3
Literacy Dig in Expository Texts
Students gather an assortment of expository texts and analyze how they provide information.

Q4
Revisiting Cogent Thoughts
Participants reflect again on the cogent thoughts in I5 and consider how their own thinking about content reading has changed

Q5
Revisiting Features of Expository Texts
Participants examine the layout and features of textbooks and consider why particular decisions were made. How do particular features support, or perhaps not support, readers?

Q6
Exploring State History
Participants brainstorm how to teach their state history without using a textbook as the primary organization or source of information.

Q7
Exploring Content Area Writing
Participants reflect on what they've learned about content area reading and consider what that means for content area writing.

Q8
Reading in the Content Areas
Participants use the jigsaw strategy to read articles on different content areas and share and discuss what they read.

Q9
Extending the Inquiry: Learning More About Orphan Trains
Participants experience possible ways of continuing the inquiry they began in D-4.

Q10
Demonstrations of Content Writing
What does quality writing from various knowledge domains or content areas look like? During the study, participants gather best examples for their own and student reference. Plans are made to make these easily available for student use.

Opportunities for Organizing & Sharing

Public displays—charts, webs, lists, notes--of accumulating ideas, knowledge and plans

Inquiry Journals
Participants keep an inquiry journal throughout this unit. Through the journal participants explore their thinking and new ideas and concepts being presented.

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Reflection/Action Plan

Focused plans that help learners reflect on their current experience and opinions in constructing their understanding of the unit of study and subsequent new practice.

RA1
Focused Reflections

Every few weeks participants review each of their journal entries to answer the following question: In what ways is my understanding of content area reading changing? How does this affect my instruction?

RA2
Taking Action

Participants complete the chart they started in 1-2 and set goals for using what they have learned about content area reading.

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Professional Reading

Avery, C. S. (1987). First grade thinkers becoming literate. *Language Arts, 64 (6),* 611–618.

Barton, K. C. and Smith, L. A. (2000). Themes or motifs?: Aiming for coherence through interdisciplinary outlines. *The Reading Teacher, 54 (1),* 54–63.

Bone, B. (2000). Lessons from a vocabulary journal. *Voices from the Middle, 7 (4),* 18–23.

Fortescue, C. M. (1994). Using oral and written language to increase understanding of math concepts. *Language Arts, 71 (8),* 576–580.

Glover, M. K. (1999). Finding our way: A year of learning with maps. In J. Lindfors & J. Townsend (Eds.), *Teaching language arts: Learning through dialogue.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Hadaway, N. L. and Young, T. A. (1994). Content literacy and language learning: Instructional decisions. *The Reading Teacher, 47 (7),* 522–527.

Maduram, I. (2000). "Playing possum": A young child's responses to information books. *Language Arts, 77 (5),* 391–397.

McClure, A. A., and Zitlow, C. S. (1991). Not just the facts: Aesthetic response in elementary content area studies. *Language Arts, 68 (1),* 27–33.

Moss, B., Leone, S., and DiPillo, M.L. (1997). Exploring the literature of fact: Linking reading and writing through information trade books. *Language Arts, 74 (6),* 418–429.

Owens, C. V. (1999). Caught between a rock and a hard place: A natural scientist writes. *Language Arts, 76 (3),* 234–240.

Short, K. and Armstrong, J. (1993). Moving Toward Inquiry: Integrating Literature Into the Science Curriculum. *The New Advocate, 6* (3), 183–199.

Siefert, P. (1999). Inquiry in the kindergarten. In J. Lindfors & J. Townsend (Eds.), *Teaching language arts: Learning through dialogue.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Whitin, D. J. and Whitin, P. (1998). Learning is born of doubting: Cultivating a skeptical stance. *Language Arts, 76 (2),* 123–129.

Young, P. (2000). Footprints in the mud: Reading science. In E. Close & K. Ramsey (Eds.), *A middle mosaic: A celebration of reading, writing, and reflective practice at the middle level.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

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Suggested Study Group Titles (not provided)

Suggested Books:

Blachowicz, C. and Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners.* New York, Guilford Publications.

Fountas, I. C. and Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Freeman, E.B. and Person, D.G. (1998). *Connecting informational children's books with content area learning.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Harvey, S. (1998). *Nonfiction matters: Reading, writing and research in grades 3-8.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

Harvey, S. and Goudvis, A. (2000*). Strategies that work.* York, ME: Stenhouse.

McLaughlin, M. and Vogt, M. E. (Eds.) (2000). *Creativity and innovation in content area teaching.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Schoenbach, R. (1999). *Reading for understanding: A guide for improving reading in middle and high school classrooms.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stephens, E. C. and Brown, J. E. (1999). *A handbook of content literacy strategies: 75 practical reading and writing ideas.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Whiten, P. and Whiten, D. J. (2000). *Math is language too: Talking and writing in the mathematics classroom.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Suggested Articles/Chapters:

Fisher, B. (19995). Math (Chapter 10). In *Thinking and learning together.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Griffin, K. (April 1997). Writing in the social studies classroom. *Voices from the Middle, 4 (2),* 31-37.

Sakai, A., Leggo, C. (April 1997). Knowing from different angles: Language arts an science connections. *Voices from the Middle, 4 (2),* 26-30.

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Suggested Resource Titles:

Walley, C.W. and Walley, K. (1995). *Integrating literature in content areas*. Westminster, CA: Teacher Created Materials, Inc.

Wood, K.D. (2001). *Literacy strategies across subject areas: Process- oriented blackline masters for the K-12 classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Wood, K.D., Lapp, D., and Flood, J (1992). *Guiding readers through text: A review of study guides*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Video Clips

This is currently being produced—the tapes arrived the week of 3/27

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